

A NEW LYCAENID BUTTERFLY FROM LESOTHO,
OF THE GENUS *ALOEIDES* HUEBNER
No. 1

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Aloeides maluti spec. nov.

This striking insect was found in the heart of the Lesotho highlands. In appearance, it combines the characteristics of *Aloeides pierus* (Cramer) and *Aloeides trimeni* Tite & Dickson, coming closer to the former on the upperside, and to the latter on the underside.

Male (Upperside).

Forewing. Heavy black borders extend along the distal portion of the wing, extending inward as far as a third of the way along vein 1, and a quarter of the way along veins 3, 4 & 5, and their corresponding areas; and, with great inward expansion of the black area subapically and below the costal margin. The remaining inner area of the wing exhibits a dusky orange colouration. There is, however, a marked degree of variation among individual specimens in some of which the wing is almost entirely suffused with black, leaving a very reduced orange area basally. Veins are all dusted with black, and the cilia are faintly chequered. In comparison with *pierus*, *maluti* males show a greater extent of orange on both fore- and hind-wing uppersides, with none of the specimens examined showing the extreme reduction of the orange area on these wings evidenced by many specimens of *pierus*. Further, the orange colouration in all specimens of *Al. maluti* is more dusky in appearance than in *pierus*. Another feature is that, in all examples studied, the males of *pierus* show blackish markings at the base of the forewing: in this species, however, the males always show dusky orange at the base of this wing.

Hindwing. As in the forewing, all veins are dusted with black, and the cilia are faintly chequered. Black lunules are evident along the distal margin, and the apical patch is well-developed, if variable. In some of the specimens examined, the apical patch extends all the way through area 4, up to vein 4, and inwards all the way to the base. In the majority of specimens examined, however, the apical patch extends only as far as vein 5, and inwards only half-way along vein 7. The remainder of the hindwing bears the same dusky orange markings evidenced in the forewing.

Female (Upperside).

Forewing. The wings are more rounded than in the males, and the dusky orange markings are more extensive. The broad black band along the distal margin does not reach further inwards than one-third of the way along veins 1 and 2, and approximately a quarter of the way along veins 3, 4, 5 and 6. In all specimens examined, the apical patch is bisected by two, and in some cases three, orange dots extending towards the costa. Veins are dusted with black, and the cilia are lightly chequered.

Hindwing. Similar to the male, except that the apical patch is much reduced. As in the male, the female shows a much greater extent of orange on the upperside of the wings than does *pierus*, and the orange basic colour is more dusky in appearance.

Male and female (Underside).

Forewing. The basic colour is dusky orange. Dull brown markings extend into the apical area, and down, or close to, the costal and distal margins. The spots of the submarginal series are placed well within the orange portion of the wing in areas 1b, 2, 3 and 4 and beyond these areas, above the orange

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field. These spots are, as in *pius* but not as in *trimeni*, black, and are not touched inwardly with white. Otherwise, the spotting is fairly typical of the genus *Aloeides*, consisting of well-defined silver spots edged with black rings, and arranged in an irregular postmedian series of five spots, together with a discoal spot, median cell-spot and a basal cell-spot.

Hindwing. Basic colour dark greyish-brown, showing in some cases a very faint light suffusion towards the distal margin. Like *trimeni*, and unlike *pius*, the hindwing colouration is extremely uniform, showing none of the dappled maroon or dappled sandy colours exhibited by *pius*. Unlike both species, *maluti* shows no tendency towards any variation of the basic colour of this wing, and none of the specimens examined show any trace of the maroon basic colour often seen in both *trimeni* and *pius*. There are a number of large, round, dull silver spots in this wing: these spots are not elongated as in *pius*, but are consistently large and rounded. All specimens exhibit three, and in some cases four, sub-basal spots, as well as a median costal spot. The remaining spotting is highly irregular, and varies considerably between specimens. In at least one specimen examined, the median series of spots is arranged in a continuous band, running all the way from the costal to the inner margins. The majority of specimens examined, however, exhibit only three spots lying adjacent to one another in areas 6 and 7, and a further three suffused spots in areas 1c, 2 and 3. This spotting does not, therefore, show the uniform and characteristic pattern seen in *pius*, which in all cases exhibits a distinct break in the median series of spots at vein 4. Similarly, since the median series in *trimeni* also shows a regular and consistent pattern, the species can in this respect also be distinguished from *trimeni*. Further, the underside spots are much larger and fewer in number than in *trimeni*, and the black rings encircling these spots are markedly more pronounced.

This species was discovered by the author and his father on an expedition to Lesotho in January, 1976. It was found near the village of Rafoelatsane, flying on the summits and slopes of low-lying hills and ridges. Specimens were encountered singly, and the species, though widespread, was found to be uncommon. The species was again encountered on two subsequent trips to the area in February, 1977 and January 1979, and on both of these expeditions was once more observed to be unusually scarce. This may in part be as a result of the heavy erosion and destruction of the environment sustained by the low-lying sandstone ridges upon which it flies — caused in turn by the over-population and over-grazing characteristic of most areas of Lesotho.

The species is named after the lofty and spectacular range of mountains which traverses the western areas of Lesotho.

I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to Mr. C. G. C. Dickson for the great assistance which he has rendered me in preparing this paper.

HOLOTYPE: Rafoelatsane, Lesotho 17-1-1976 (E. L. Pringle)

ALLOTYPE: Rafoelatsane, Lesotho 17-1-1976 (E. L. Pringle)

PARATYPES: Rafoelatsane, Lesotho 1 ♂ 1 ♀ 17-1-1976 (V. L. Pringle); 2 ♀ 17-1-1976 (E.L.P.); 1 ♀ 2-2-1977 (V.L.P.); 1 ♂ 2-2-1977 (V.L.P.); 1 ♂ 1 ♀ 20-1-1979 (V.L.P.); 1 ♀ 5-2-1977 (E.L.P.); 3 ♂ 2 ♀ 22-1-1979 (E.L.P.); 3 ♂ 1 ♀ 22-1-1979 (V.L.P.).

Two paratypes will in due course be presented to the British Museum.